

Conflict Analysis in The Bible From Ten Narratives

Sanggam Siahaan¹, Yanti Elizabeth Sidauruk², Cristina Geovani³, Indah Dame Nababan⁴, Angelina Sinabutar⁵, Yuli Winarti Gultom⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6} Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar
e-mail: sanggam.siahaan@uhnp.ac.id

Abstrak

Konflik dalam narasi Alkitab memberikan pandangan yang mendalam tentang pengalaman manusia, hubungan dengan Tuhan, dan dinamika sosial. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa konflik bukan hanya tantangan yang harus diatasi dan dihindari, melainkan elemen penting dalam perjalanan iman dan perkembangan moral. Dengan menganalisis berbagai bentuk konflik, pembaca dapat mengambil pelajaran berharga yang relevan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari, dan berusaha menanamkan nilai-nilai kebaikan, pemaafan, dan penerimaan kasih dalam interaksi sosial mereka. Pemahaman ini membuka jalan bagi pertumbuhan spiritual dan moral di tengah tantangan kehidupan.

Kata kunci: *Konflik, Analisis, Alkitab, Narasi*

Abstract

Conflicts in biblical narratives provide insight into human experience, relationship with God, and social dynamics. The findings confirm that conflict is not just a challenge to be overcome and avoided, but an essential element in the journey of faith and moral development. By analysing different forms of conflict, readers can draw valuable lessons relevant to everyday life, and seek to instil the values of kindness, forgiveness, and loving acceptance in their social interactions. This understanding paves the way for spiritual and moral growth amidst the challenges of life.

Keywords : *Conflict, Analysis, Bible, Narrative*

INTRODUCTION

The term conflict is derived from Latin, specifically from the components "con" and "figere." The prefix "con" translates to together, while "figere" means to strike. According to the KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia), conflict is defined as disputes, differing opinions, and clashes. Therefore, it can be concluded that conflict arises when two or more differing views, beliefs, desires, interests, needs, or values oppose each other and do not harmonize.

Conflict has been a constant aspect of human existence from ancient times through the modern era of globalization (Lang, 2006). It manifests across all time periods, countries, social structures, and facets of human life. Many scholars assert that conflict is a crucial element of leadership and management.

Alo Liliweri characterized conflict as a natural opposition that emerges among individuals or groups due to differences in beliefs, attitudes, needs, and values. In contrast, Soerjono Soekanto defined conflict as a social process whereby individuals or groups seek to meet their needs through methods that may involve opposing parties, often accompanied by violence or threats.

According to James A.F. Stoner and Charles Wankel cited in Ramadhani & Azmy (2024), there are five categories of conflict: 1) Intrapersonal Conflict: This type occurs within an individual who faces two conflicting desires that cannot be fulfilled at the same time. 2) Interpersonal Conflict: This conflict arises between individuals due to conflicting interests or desires. This type of conflict is particularly dynamic and significant within organizational behavior, as it involves various roles from multiple organization members, potentially influencing the achievement of the organization's goals.

Biblical narratives often contain deep moral, theological, and philosophical values that resonate with different peoples and generations. They serve not only as historical records of religion but also as sources of ethical teachings relevant to everyday life. The Bible features a wide range of narrative stories, including creation accounts, the lives of historical figures, and parables shared by Jesus.

In this study, researchers examined ten narrative stories from the Bible to explore their themes, conflicts, and moral lessons. While many of these narratives are well-known, their deeper meanings are frequently overlooked. The chosen stories present various conflicts worthy of further investigation, including internal struggles within characters, conflicts between individuals, and those between humans and God.

This study aimed to answer the following questions: How can the conflicts presented in these ten biblical narratives be interpreted, and what values can be derived from their resolutions? By analyzing these conflicts, researchers sought to identify values relevant to modern readers and to enhance the understanding of how biblical stories can guide individuals in facing life's challenges.

Biblical narratives frequently encapsulate significant moral, theological, and philosophical values that resonate with various cultures and generations. They function as historical accounts of religion and as sources of ethical lessons applicable to daily life. The Bible offers diverse narrative stories, ranging from creation accounts to the lives of historical figures and teachings of Jesus through parables. Given the importance of these narratives in cultural and religious contexts, it is crucial to analyze and understand the messages they convey.

In this study, researchers explored ten biblical stories to uncover their themes, conflicts, and moral messages. Although many of these narratives are well-known, their deeper meanings are often not fully appreciated. The selected stories reveal various conflicts that deserve further exploration, including internal character conflicts, interpersonal conflicts, and those between humans and the divine.

This research sought to address the question: How can the conflicts that arise in these ten biblical narratives be interpreted, and what values can be extracted from their resolutions? By delving into these conflicts, researchers aimed to identify values pertinent to contemporary readers and to deepen the understanding of how biblical narratives can function as guides in navigating life's challenges.

Conflicts in biblical narratives reveal aspects of human life that are relevant in moral, theological, and social contexts. In the birth of Jesus, there is a tension between worldly and spiritual power, where King Herod views the birth of Jesus as a political threat, while the Magi welcome him as the Messiah (Crossan, 1999). The conflict between Abraham and Lot, which arises from limited resources, illustrates moral choices in resolving disputes. Abraham chooses the path of peace, which shows the ethical principle of maintaining family harmony (Finkelstein, 2001). The conflict between Sarah and Hagar raises the theme of gender, showing the emotional tensions that occur in patriarchal families where women often play the role of status objects and descendants (Trible, 1978). On the other hand, Moses faces psychological challenges of leadership when the Israelites question his actions, which reveals collective dependency in difficult situations (Kille, 2000). The conflict between Jacob and Esau, which ends in forgiveness, shows that reconciliation can be a way to repair relationships damaged by past mistakes (Fox, 2006).

From a theological perspective, Abraham's obedience to God when called to leave his home demonstrates the tension between faith and reason, where he follows God's command despite uncertainty (Kierkegaard, 1843). Joseph's conflict with his brothers illustrates a family dynamic marked by jealousy, reflecting the social hierarchy that often causes divisions in family structures (Epp, 2005). The story of Noah and the flood that swept the world contains message eco-theological, which describes human responsibility towards nature and the consequences of disobedience to God (White, 1967). The Israelites who complained throughout their journey in the wilderness faced a test of spiritual endurance, where they continually doubted God's power even though they had been rescued from slavery (Ellens, 2004). Finally, the teaching of God's unconditional love invites humans to love regardless of differences, reflecting the concept of agape which encourages devotion to universal love as a form of pure affection that transcends human

egoism (Nygren, 1953). Through these various perspectives, the conflict narratives in the Bible not only depict conflicts between characters, but also convey moral lessons that are relevant to readers in understanding life, faith, and interpersonal relationships.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative study with the aim of analyzing narrative stories about 10 stories in the Bible by analyzing each story with predetermined data. This study is based on narrative texts containing 10 stories in the Bible. 10 titles of narrative texts written, in narrative texts that have been analyzed. 10 scientific papers by 6 students of the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar University Year 2023/2024. The object of this study includes aspects of conflict that occur in 10 narratives written by a group of 6 students. This object refers to various factors as objects of analysis. The conflicts in the Bible stories highlight the complexity of human experience and relationship with God. Themes of faith versus doubt, human weakness versus God's will, and interpersonal conflict. aspects of conflict that they use as their own reasons for writing their narratives. during data collection in this study. Using an inductive method to outline general principles based on documents from 10 stories in the Bible as research data. Therefore, this data requires processing to be analyzed based on observations in the form of words and follow-up texts. The procedure for collecting and analyzing data in this study follows the flow of analysis of the interactive model of components in written narrative texts .

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Story 1. Contradictory Narratives

1. Contradictory Narrative

The birth of Jesus is described in two different ways in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Matthew states that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and later the family fled to Egypt, while Luke mentions that Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth and traveled to Bethlehem for a census, where Jesus was born in a manger. This inconsistency creates tension in understanding the chronology and location of His birth.

2. Reaction to Birth

The birth of Jesus was met with joy by the Magi who came to worship Him, but Herod felt threatened and ordered the murder of all male children in Bethlehem. This illustrates the duality of societal reactions: the hope for a Messiah contrasted with the fear of losing power.

Story 2. Conflicts Involving Abraham and Lot

1. Conflict with Lot

In Genesis 13:5-13, a conflict arose between the shepherds of Abraham and Lot due to limited resources. Abraham chose to resolve the conflict peacefully by offering Lot the choice of land. This decision reflects Abraham's wisdom, even though it created tension, especially when Lot chose the outskirts of Sodom, which later had negative consequences.

2. Conflict between Sarah and Hagar

Genesis 16:1-16 illustrates the conflict between Sarah and Hagar after Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to bear children. When Hagar became pregnant, their relationship deteriorated, leading to competition and tension. Sarah felt threatened by Hagar's position, resulting in Hagar and her son Ishmael being expelled. This situation highlights the consequences of impulsive decisions and impatience regarding God's promises.

3. Internal Conflict

Abraham faced an internal struggle in accepting God's promise of descendants, especially given his old age and the barrenness of his wife (Genesis 17:15-22). This uncertainty led to moments of doubt, as seen when Abraham laughed upon hearing the promise. Nevertheless, he maintained his faith in God, illustrating the tension between faith and reality.

Story 3. The Importance of Love

This story does not contain specific conflicts. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of loving and helping one another as a manifestation of mutual concern.

Story 4. God's Love

In this narrative, there is no conflict; rather, it serves as an invitation to love one another as a reflection of God's love for His people. The central message is that God's love transcends all, and therefore, humans must also demonstrate love to others as a representation of God's true love.

Story 5. Conflicts of the Heart

1. Internal Conflict

This conflict arises when an individual faces the choice of retaliating against insults or responding with kindness. It represents the inner struggle between the desire for revenge and the call to remain humble, loving, and patient.

2. Social Conflict

There is a conflict between someone striving to live righteously in Christ and those who blaspheme or criticize them. This reflects the social tension between acts of kindness and negative responses from others who may not appreciate such behavior.

3. Moral Conflict

A moral conflict occurs when an individual must decide to continue doing good, even at the risk of suffering. This struggle involves choosing to do the right thing or succumbing to the pressure to respond inappropriately. The main conflict revolves around how to face insults and injustice with kindness, humility, and love, despite the potential for suffering.

Story 6. Conflicts of the Hebrew Nation

1. Internal Conflict

The Hebrew nation experienced internal conflict due to impatience and constant complaints. Their infidelity and doubt persisted despite witnessing various miracles from God. Feelings of fear, exhaustion, and uncertainty created an inner struggle, highlighting the conflict between belief and doubt.

2. External Conflict

There was a conflict between Moses, their leader, and the Hebrew people, who continuously complained and questioned his leadership in their journey out of Egypt. Despite Moses' efforts to help them, they remained worried and doubtful about the path he chose under God's command, creating tension between Moses' firm trust in God and the people's pessimism.

3. Conflict with God

This conflict manifested in the Hebrew nation's distrust and dissatisfaction with God, even after being freed from slavery and witnessing miracles. They continued to lament their circumstances, such as poverty and thirst, despite God's provision of water, food (manna), and quail. This represents a conflict of faith between humanity and God.

4. Conflict with Nature

Although not explicitly stated, the journey of the Hebrew nation through the harsh desert reflects a conflict with nature. They had to endure extreme heat, hunger, thirst, and the challenges of survival in the wilderness, which exacerbated their discomfort and frustration.

Story 7. Jacob's Conflicts

1. Internal Conflict

Jacob experienced guilt and fear regarding Esau's potential anger over his past deceit. He worried about how Esau would receive him after twenty years apart.

2. External Conflict

The past deception created tension between Jacob and Esau. However, this conflict was resolved when Esau forgave Jacob and expressed love.

3. Conflict with God

Jacob prayed for God's protection, fearing Esau's anger and hoping for a safe reunion with his family. This illustrates the struggle between fear and trust in God. The main conflict centers on the strength of reconciliation, which resolves issues and brings peace.

Story 8. Abraham's Obedience

This story does not present a conflict but highlights Abraham's willingness to obey God's commands, even without knowing the destination. With complete trust in God, Abraham and Sarah left their home in Haran to journey toward the promised land.

Story 9. Joseph's Journey

1. Internal Conflict

Joseph experienced deep sadness due to betrayal by his brothers and separation from his father, Jacob, and younger brother, Benjamin. Despite this, he fought to remain calm and confident that God was with him, even in the difficult situation of being a slave in a foreign land.

2. External Conflict

Joseph had to adapt to life as a slave in Potiphar's house. Initially, he held a low status, but through hard work, good character, and trust in God, he won the favor of Potiphar and those around him, overcoming the challenges of slavery.

3. Social Conflict

Joseph, once favored by Jacob, had to accept his new status as a slave. This drastic change in social standing challenged him mentally and spiritually, yet he demonstrated steadfastness and faith that God would enable him to thrive.

The main conflict revolves around Joseph's journey to overcome suffering and injustice through trust in God, who helped him lead a fruitful life despite his difficult circumstances.

Story 10. God's Grief and Noah's Calling

1. Divine Anger

God felt sorrow and anger at the rampant wickedness of humanity (Genesis 6:5-7). This created tension between the divine desire to punish and the hope for humanity's redemption.

2. Calling to Noah

God chose Noah, the only righteous man, to build the ark, highlighting the importance of obedience in the face of widespread corruption.

3. Noah's Internal Conflict

Despite his obedience, Noah likely faced doubt and fear about the future, especially while building the ark amidst skepticism from others. This created tension between his faith and the reality of his situation.

4. Conflict with Nature

The devastating floods represented a conflict between the forces of nature (heavy rain) and the struggle for survival. This depicted the challenge of opposing a greater power.

Findings Conflict in the Bible Narrative

This study analyzes ten stories in the Bible that reveal various relevant conflicts within moral, theological, and social contexts. Key findings from the analysis are as follows:

1. Contradictory Narratives

The birth of Jesus creates tension between the differing narratives found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, representing the duality of hope and threat within society (Story 1).

2. Inter-Character Conflict

- The dispute between Abraham and Lot illustrates the choice for peace in the face of limited resources and highlights the impact of impulsive decisions (Story 2).
- The conflict between Sarah and Hagar reflects gender tensions within a patriarchal structure (Story 2).
- The conflict between Jacob and Esau concludes with reconciliation, demonstrating the power of mending broken relationships (Story 7).

3. Inner Conflict

Many characters experience internal struggles that reflect doubt, fear, and the challenge of maintaining faith, as seen in the stories of Abraham, Joseph, and Noah (Acts 5, 9, and 10).

4. Social and Moral Conflict

Conflicts between kindness and negative public responses appear in the narratives, showcasing the challenges of upholding moral values (Story 5).

5. Conflict with God

The Hebrew nation frequently questioned God's decisions, creating tension between faith and doubt (Story 6).

Discussion

The conflicts identified in biblical narratives serve not only as elements of the story but also reflect the dilemmas faced by humanity within moral, social, and spiritual contexts. The following analysis elaborates on these findings:

1. Duality of Hope and Threat

The birth of Jesus illustrates the messianic hope juxtaposed with political threats. This reflects the social reality where hope is often accompanied by fear of established power.

2. The Importance of Moral Decisions

Abraham's choice to resolve conflict through peaceful means demonstrates that moral decisions made in difficult situations can have long-term positive consequences for both individuals and the community.

3. Struggle of Faith

The internal conflicts experienced by characters such as Joseph and Noah reveal how faith can be tested in extreme circumstances, yet it can also become a source of strength to overcome challenges.

4. Reconciliation as a Solution

The story of Jacob and Esau emphasizes the importance of reconciliation in mending broken relationships, illustrating that reconciliation can pave the way to peace.

5. Response to Injustice

Narratives that highlight conflict underscore the social and moral imperative to act with goodness in the face of injustice, encouraging readers to reflect on how they respond to daily challenges.

CONCLUSION

Conflict in biblical narratives provides valuable insights into the human experience, the relationship with God, and social dynamics. The findings indicate that conflict is not merely an issue to be avoided; rather, it is an important component of one's faith journey and moral growth. By understanding the various forms of conflict, readers can apply the lessons learned to their own lives, striving to promote values such as kindness, forgiveness, and love.

REFERENCES

- Callaghan, Fija. What is Conflict in a Story? Definition and 4 Types of Conflict Examples. [google]. 2024. Downloaded September 2024. Available from: <https://www.scribophile.com/academy/what-is-conflict#:~:text=In%20a%20story%2C%20conflict%20is,something%20that's%20in%20direct%20opposition>.
- Crawford, D. & Bodine, R. (1996). Conflict resolution education: a guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and juvenile justice and community settings. Office of Delinquency Prevention and Juvenile Justice, and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. US: US Department of Justice.
- Creswell, John W. & Creswell, J. David. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods: Approaches. Fifth Edition. [google]. Sage. 2018. Downloaded September 2024. Available from: https://spada.uns.ac.id/pluginfile.php/510378/mod_resource/content/1/creswell.pdf
- Delatorre et al. Facing Paradox: New Perspectives on the Impact of Uncertainty in Tension. Front Psychol. 2018. Downloaded September 2024. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6092602/>

- Gibson, James L., et al., 1977. *Organization: Behavior, Structure, Process*. Translated by Adriani. Jakarta: Binarupa Aksara Wirawan. (2010). *Conflict and Conflict Management: Theory, Application, and Research*. Salemba Empat, Jakarta.
- Lang, M. (2006). Globalization and Its History. *The Journal of Modern History*, 78(4), 899–931. <https://doi.org/10.1086/511251>
- Lehne, Moritz & Koelsch, Stefan Tension and Tension and Its Relevance to Emotion Research. [google]. Section. *Emotion Science*. 2015. Volume 6 - 2015 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00079>. Downloaded September 2024. Available from: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00079/full>
- MasterClass. Tension vs. Conflict: What's the Difference?. [google] 2021. Downloaded September 2024. Available from: <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/tension-vs-conflict-whats-the-difference>
- Ramadhani, N. A., & Azmy, A. (2024). Conceptual Model of Conflict Management in Companies as a Causality for Employee Turnover. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 11(1), 385-396.
- Sholihah , FarkhatuPlot Analysis in James Marsh 's Theory of Everything. *E-Link Journal*. [google]. 2021. Downloaded in September 2024. Vol.8 No. 1 (2021) p-ISSN: 2085-1383; e-ISSN: 2621-4156
- Staton, Robert. *Theory of Fiction* . Pustaka Pelajar. Yogyakarta . 2007
- Winkle, Chris. *Understanding Conflict & Tension* October.[google]. 2014. Downloaded September 2024. Available from: <https://mythcreants.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2014-Understanding-Conflict-and-Tension-Mythcreants.pdf>